The Story of Howard the Halt

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Chapter 1 - Of Thorbiorn and the Icefirthers.

Here beginneth this story, and telleth of a man named Thorbiorn, the son of Thiodrek, who dwelt in Icefirth at a house called Bathstead, and had the priesthood over Icefirth ; he was a man of great kin and a mighty chief, but the most unjust of men, neither was there any throughout Icefirth who bore any might to gainsay him: he would take the daughters of men or their kinswomen, and handfast them awhile, and then send them home again. From some men he took their goods and chattels in their despite, and other some he drave away from their lands. He had taken a woman, Sigrid by name, young and high-born, to be over his household; great wealth she had, which Thorbiorn would hold for her behoof, but not put out to usury while she was with him.

A man named Howard dwelt at the stead of Bluemire: he was of great kin, but now sunk unto his latter days , in his earlier life he had been a great viking, and the best of champions; but in a certain fight he had gotten many sore hurts, and amongst them one under his kneepan, whereby he went halt ever after. Howard was a wedded man, and his wife was hight Biargey, a woman of good kin, and the most stirring of women. One son they had, hight Olaf, young of years, the. doughtiest of men, great of growth, and goodly of aspect: Howard and Biargey loved him much, and he was obedient and kind unto them.

Thormod was the name of a man who dwelt at Bank, whose wife was hight Thorgerd: he was little to people’s minds, and was now somewhat stricken in years; it was said of him that he had more shapes than one, and all folk deemed him most ill to deal with.

Liot was the name of one who dwelt at Moonberg in Icefirth, a big man and a strong, brother to Thor-biorn, and in all wise as like him as might be.

A man named Thorkel dwelt on an isle called Eider-isle : he was a wise man, but of feeble heart, though of great kin : he was of all men the least outspoken : he was the Lawman of those of Icefirth. Two more men are named in the story ; one named Brand, and the other Vakr, homemen of Thorbiorn of Bathstead: Brand was great of growth and mighty of strength; it was his business to go hither and thither in the summer, and fetch home things of need for the stead; but in winter he had to watch the full-grown sheep; he was a man well-beloved, and no busybody.

Vakr was sister’s son of Thorbiorn, a little man, and freckled of face, murderous of speech, and foul-mouthed; he would ever be egging Thorbiorn, his kinsman, of two minds to be of the worser: wherefore was he unbefriended, and folk grudged him no true word about himself: he did no work save going about with Thorbiorn at home and abroad, and doing his errands for him, and that more especially when he was about some evil deed.

A woman named Thordis dwelt at the Knoll in Icefirth; she was sister of Thorbiorn, and mother of Vakr, and had another son named Scart, a big and strong man, who abode with his mother, and was master over her household.

Thoralf was the name of a man who abode at Loonsere, a man well befriended, albeit of no great account; he was nigh akin to Sigrid, Thorbiorn’s housekeeper, and had craved to have her home to him, and to put her money out to usury; but Thorbiorn would not have it so, but once more showed forth his injustice, forbidding him ever speak a word hereof again.

Chapter 2 - Of the Great Manhood of Olaf Howardson.

Here taketh up the tale the telling of how that Olaf waxed up at Bluemire, and became a hopeful man: men say that Olaf Howardson had bear's-warmth; for there was never that frost or cold wherein he would go in more raiment than breeches alone, with shirt girded thereinto ; never went he forth from the house clad in more raiment than that.

There was a man named Thorhall, a homeman of Howard, and akin to him, a young man of the briskest, who used to get things together for the household.

One autumn the men of Icefirth fared to their, sheep-walks, and gathered but little there, and Thorbiorn of Bathstead lacked sixty wethers. Winter-nights wore, and they were not found, but a little before winter Olaf Howardson went up into the sheep-walks, and all the fells, and searched for men's sheep, and found many, both those of Thorbiorn, and his own and his fathers, and other folk's besides: then he drave the sheep home, and brought his own to each man : whereby he became well-beloved, and he had all men's thanks therefor.

Early on a day Olaf drave Thorbiorn's wethers down to Bathstead, and he got there by then all folk were set down to table, and there was no man without; so he smote on the door and a woman came thereto, Sigrid to wit, Thorbiorn's housekeeper, and she greeted him well, and asked him what he would ; Olaf answered : "I have brought Thorbiorn's wethers here, even those that he lost in the autumn."

But when Thorbiorn heard that the door was smitten on, he bade Vakr go see who was come thither, so Vakr arose and went to the wicket, and there he saw how Olaf and Sigrid were a-talking together; so he got up on the ledge of the door and stood there while they talked. Now Olaf was saying; "No need to go further then; thou Sigrid shalt tell where the wethers are."

She said that so it should be, and bade him farewell: whereon Vakr ran back whooping into the hall: then Thorbiorn asked him why he went on so, or who was to hand: said he: "I believe verily that he, Olaf Howardson the Bluemire booby, has been here, driving home thy sheep that were missing last harvest." "A good deed" said Thorbiorn.

"Ah, methinks there was something else behind his coming, though," said Vakr, "for he and Sigrid have been talking away all the morning, and I could see that she liked well enough to lay her arms about his neck."

Quoth Thorbiorn: "Dauntless though Olaf be, yet is he overbold thus to go about to win my hatred."

So Olaf fared home. Time weareth, and, as saith the tale, ever would Olaf be coming to Bath-stead, and seeing Sigrid; and things went well betwixt them, and the rumour went abroad presently that Olaf was beguiling her.

Next harvest went men to their sheep-walks, and again brought home but little, and again Thorbiorn lacked most: so when the folding was over, Olaf gat him away alone, and went into the sheep-walks far and wide, over mount and moor, and again found many sheep and drave them into the peopled parts, and once more brought each man his own; whereby he became so beloved of the bonders that all men gave him good thanks, saving Thorbiorn, who waxed exceeding grim at him for all this; both that others praised him, and that he heard folk say the country over, of how he came to Sigrid: neither spared Vakr to slander Olaf to Thorbiorn. Now once more it has come to pass that Olaf is gotten to Bathstead with as many wethers as aforetime; and when he came thither no man was without; so went he into the hall, and master Thorbiorn was therein, and Vakr his kinsman, and many homemen: Olaf

went well-nigh up to the dais, and smote his axe-shaft down on to the floor and leaned thereon: but none greeted him, and all kept silence; so Olaf, when he found that no man gave any heed to him, sang a stave :

This silence shall I break And to Thanes speechless speak. Stems of the spear-wood tall Why sit ye hushed in hall ? What honour then have those Who keep their mouths shut close ? Now long have I stood here And had no word of cheer.

Spake Olaf then: "It is my errand hither, goodman Thorbiorn, that I have brought home thy wethers."

"Yea," said Vakr, "men know, Olaf, that thou art become the Icefirth sheep-drover; and we wot of thine errand hither, that thou art come to claim a share in the sheep; after the fashion of beggars. ?And it were best to remember him, little as the alms may be."

Olaf answered: "Nay, that is not my errand, neither will I drive sheep here the third time." And he turned away, and Vakr sprang up and whooped after him, but Olaf gave no heed at all to it, but went his ways home.

So wear the seasons; and that harvest men get home their sheep well, save Thorbiorn, who again lacked sixty wethers, and found them not at all: so those kinsmen let out the word that Olaf had a mind to claim share in them, or to steal them else. Now on an evening as Olaf and his father sat at the board together there lay a leg of mutton on' the dish, and Olaf took it up, and said: "A wondrous big and fat leg is this."

"Yea," said Howard, "but methinks, kinsman, it came from our sheep and not from Master Thorbiorn's: a heavy thing to have to bear such injustice!"

Olaf laid the leg down on the board, and flushed red; and it seemed to them that sat by as though; he had smitten on the board; anyhow, the leg brake asunder so sharply that one part thereof flew up into the gable wainscot and stuck there: Howard looked up arid smiled, but said nought. Even therewith walked a woman into the hall, and there was come Thorgerd of Bank: Howard greeted her well, and asked for tidings, and she said that her husband Thormod was dead.

"Yea, but things go amiss with us," she said, "for he cometh home to his bed every night: wherefore I fain would have some help from thee, goodman: for whereas my men deemed it ill dealing with Thormod aforetime, now are things come to such a pass that they are all minded to be gone." Howard answered: "I am passed the briskest way of my life now, and am unmeet for such dealings: why goest thou not to Bathstead? it is to be looked for of chieftains that they should presently use their might in the country-side for the settling of such matters."

She answered : "No good do I look for thence; nay, I am well content if he do me no harm."

Said Howard; "Then do I counsel thee to ask Olaf, my son; meet it is for young men to try their manliness in such wise : time was when we should have deemed it good game."

Even so she did, and Olaf promised to go, and bade her abide there that night; but the next day Olaf went home with Thorgerd, at whose house were all folk down-hearted.

But at night folk went to bed and Olaf lay in a gable-end bed out by the door. In such wise burnt light in the hall, that it was bright aloft and dim below. Olaf lay down in his shirt and breeches (for he never wore other clothes) and cast a fell over him. Now at nightfall Thormod walked into the hall wagging his bald head, and saw that there was a man abed where none was wont to lie; and forsooth he was not

over hospitable, so he turned thither, and caught hold of the fell; Olaf would not let it go, but held on till they tore it atwain betwixt them ; so when Thormod saw there was might in him that lay there, he leapt up into the settle by the bed. Olaf sprang up and laid hold on his axe to smite him, but things went quicker than he looked for, and Thormod ran in under his hand, and Olaf had to grapple with him. The struggle was of the fiercest; Thormod was so hard a gripper that the flesh gave way before him wheresoever he took hold: and . most things flew about that were before them. Even in that nick of time the light died out, and Olaf deemed matters nowise amended thereby. Thormod fell on furiously, and it came, to pass in the end that they drave out of doors. In the home-mead lay a great drift-log, and as hap would have it Thormod tripped both his heels against the log and fell aback: Olaf let his knee follow the belly of him and served Thormod in such wise that he did with him as he would. All folk were silent when Olaf came back into the hall; but when he let himself be heard, folk were afoot and the light kindled at one and the same time, and they fell to stroking of him up and down, for he was all bruised by Thormod's handling; every child of man that could speak gave thanks to him, and he said he deemed that they would have no more hurt of Thormod.

Olaf abode there certain days, and then went back to Bluemire; but the fame of that deed of his spread wide through Icefirth, and all the -quarters of the land. Nevertheless from all. this also the hatred of Thorbiorn to him did but wax the more.

Chapter 3 - Howard shifteth his Dwelling-Place

It is next to be told how a whale came ashofe in Icefirth : now Thorbiorn and Howard had rights of drift adjoining one to the other, and men said straightway that this whale was Howard's of right; and it was the best of whales. Either side went thither, and would have the judgment of the Lawman thereon : many men were come together there, and it seemed clear to all that Howard should have the whale.

But now Thorkel the Lawman being come, he was asked whose the whale was: he answered, speaking, very low, "Certainly the whale is theirs." Then went Thorbiorn to him with drawn sword, "Whose, thou wretch?" said he. "O thine, thine, surely," said Thorkel in all haste, letting his head fall. So then Thorbiorn set to work, and with wrongdoing took to him all the whale, and Howard went home ill content with his lot, and all men now deemed that Thorbiorn's utter wrongdoing was again made manifest.

On a day Olaf went to his sheep-folds because the weather was hard that winter, and men had great need to look to their sheep, and that night had been exceeding hard; so when he was about going he sees a man coming up to the house, Brand the Strong to wit. Olaf greeted him, and Brand took his greeting well; Olaf asked what made him there so late. Brand said: "It is an ugly tale. I went to my sheep early in the day, but they had all got driven down on to the foreshore ; there were two places whereby to drive them up, but so oft as I tried to do that, there was a man in the way, and withstood them, so that they all came back into my arms; and thus has it gone on all day until now, wherefore am I fain that we go there both together."

"That will I do for thy prayer," said Olaf.

So they went both together down to the foreshore, and when they would drive up the sheep thence, they saw Thormod, Olaf's wrestling-fellow, standing in the way, and staying the sheep, so that they cajne back into their arms. Then said Olaf, "Which wilt thou, Brand, drive the sheep, or play with Thormod?"

"The easiest will I choose," said Brand, "driving the sheep to wit."

Then Olaf went there whereas stood Thormod against him up above. There lay a great snowdrift over the face of the bank. Olaf ran forthwith up the bank at Thormod, who gave back before him ; but when he came up on to the bank Thormod ran under the arms of him, and Olaf caught hold and wrestled with all his might; they played a long while, and Olaf thought that Thormod had lost but little of his strength from that handling of his: so it came to pass that they both fell together on the face of the bank, and rolled over and over one another till they tumbled into the drift below, and now one, now the other, was atop, till they came on to the foreshore; by then as it happed Thormod was under, so Olaf made the most of it, and brake the back of him asunder, and served him as he would, and then swam out to sea with him and sank him in the depths of the sea; and ever after have men deemed it uncouth for men sailing anigh there.

Then Olaf swam ashore, and Brand had by then driven up all the sheep, and he gave Olaf fair welcome, and so each went his ways home.

But when Brand came home, the night was far spent, and Thorbiorn asked what had belated him. Brand told him how things had gone, and how Olaf had stood him in stead. Then said Vakr: "Thou must have been sore afraid, whereas thou praisest that booby: his fame will mostly come of his dealings with ghosts, forsooth."

Brand answered: "Thou wouldst havebeen more afraid ; for ever art thou greatest in talk, as the fox in his tail, and in nowise art thou a match for him."

So they talked till either grew hot; then Thor-biorn bade Brand not to champion Olaf: " It shall be ill for thee or any other to make more of Olaf than me or my kin."

So weareth winter, and when spring is come, Howard falleth to talk with Olaf his son, saying: "Things have come to this, kinsman, that I have no heart to live any longer so nigh to Thorbiorn, for we have no might to hold our own against him."

Olaf said : "It is little to my mind to have such boot for our wrongs as to flee before Thorbiorn ; yet will I that thou rule; whither wilt thou, then?"

Howard answered : "Out on the other side of the firth are many empty tofts' and wide lands owned of no man ; there will I that we set up our dwelling, and then we shall be nigher to our friends and kinsfolk."

That rede they take and flit all their stock and such goods as they had, and set up there a very goodly house, which was afterward called Howard-stead.

Now there were no bonders in Icefirth in those days, but were land-settlers.

Chapter 4 - The Slaying of Olaf Howardson

Now Thorbiorn Thiodrekson rode every summer to the Thing with his men; he was a mighty chief, of great stock, and had many kinsmen.

In those days Guest Oddleifson dwelt at the Mead on Bardstrand; he was a great sage, and wise and, well-befriended, the most foreseeing of all men, and had rule over many.

Now the same summer that the father and son shifted their dwelling Thorbiorn rode to the Thing a-wooing, and craved the sister of Guest Oddleifson. Guest was cold over the match, saying that Thorbiorn was little to his mind because of his injustice and violence; but whereas many furthered Thorbiorn in his wooing, Guest gave him this choice, that the match should be if he promised by hand given to lay aside his injustice and. wrongdoing, and to render his own to each man, and hold by law and right; but if he would not bring himself to this, then was Guest to be quit of the bargain, and the match to be clean voided.

Thorbiorn assented hereto, and the bargain was struck on these terms. Then Thorbiorn rode from the Thing home with Guest to Bardstrand, and the wedding was holden in the summer, and that was the best of bridals.

But when these tidings were known in. Icefirth, Sigrid and Thoralf her kinsman take counsel together, and summon the bonders, and let appraise for Sigrid her goods out of Bathstead. and thereafter she fared to Thoralf at Loonsere.

So when Thorbiorn came home to Bathstead he was wondrous wroth that Sigrid was gone; and he threatened the bonders with measureless evil in that they had appraised those goods, and he grew as hard as hard might be, for he deemed his might waxen by this alliance of his.

Master Howard’s live stock was very wild that summer, and on a morning early the herdsman came in, and Olaf asked how it went with him. "So it goes," quoth he, " that there is a deal of the beasts missing, and I may not do both at once, seek for those that are lost, and heed them that are found." "Keep a good heart, fellow," answered Olaf, "heed what thou hast, and I will go seek the missing."

Now by this time he was grown to be the most hopeful of men, and the goodliest to look on, and both big and strong: he was eighteen winters old. So Olaf took his axe in his hand, and went down along by the firth till he came to Loonsere, and there he sees that those sheep are all gotten to the place where they first came aland; so he turned toward the house early in the morning-tide, and smote on the door, and thither came Sigrid, and greeted him well, and well he took her greeting.

But now when they had talked awhile, Sigrid said: "Lo a boat coming over the firth, and therein I see clearly Thorbiorn Thiodrekson and Vakr his kinsman; and I can see their weapons lying forward in the prow, and Warflame is there, Thorbiorn’s sword; and now either he will have done an ill deed or be minded for one; wherefore I pray thee Olaf meet him not; this long while have ye been ill seen one of another, and belike matters will not be bettered since ye were at the appraising of the goods for me from Bathstead."

Olaf answered : "I fear not Thorbiorn whiles I have done him no wrong, and but a little way will I run before him alone."

"A brave word of thine" she said, "that thou, a lad of eighteen winters, must needs yield nought before one who is any man’s match in fight, and beareth a sword whose stroke will not be stayed by aught; yea, and I deem that if their intent is to meet thee, as indeed my mind forebodes me, wicked Vakr will not sit idle by the fight."

Olaf answered : "I have no errand with Thorbiorn, and I will not go meet them, yet if we do meet, thou shalt have to ask after brave deeds if need there be."

"Nay, I shall never ask thereof," said Sigrid.

Then Olaf sprang up quickly, and bade her live long and happy, and she bade him farewell; and therewith he went down to the foreshore whereas lay the sheep; and Thorbiorn and Vakr were come to land now, over against that very place; so he went his ways down to the boat and met it, and drew it up under them on to the beach. Thorbiorn greeted Olaf well, and he took the greeting, and asked whither away, and Thorbiorn said he would go see his sister Thordis. "So go we all together," said Olaf; "it falleth amiss, because I must needs drive my sheep home; and verily it might well be said that sheep-drovers shall be getting great men in Icefirth if thou shouldst lower thyself so far as to take to that craft."

"Nay, I heed that nought" said Thorbiorn.

Now there was a big heap of wood on the beach, whereon lay a great forked cudgel with the ends broken off: this Olaf caught up and bore in his hand, and so drave the sheep before him, and they went their ways all together.

Thorbiorn talked with Olaf, and was as merry as might be: but Olaf found that they would ever be hanging back; so he looked to that, and then on they went all abreast, till they came past the knoll, and there the ways sundered.

Then Thorbiorn turned about and said : "Kinsman Vakr, there is no longer any need to put off that which we would do."

Olaf saw the intent of them, and turned up on to the bent, and they set on him from below: Olaf warded himself with the cudgel, but Thorbiorn smote hard and oft with the sword Warflame, and sliced away the cudgel as if it had been a stalk of angelica: yet gat they heavy strokes from the cudgel whiles it held out; but when it was all smitten to pieces Olaf took to his axe, and defended himself so well that they deemed it doubtful how it would go between them; and they were all wounded.

Now Thordis, Thorbiorn’s sister, went out that morning of the fight, and heard the noise thereof, but might not see aught; so she sent her foot-page to see what was toward ; who came back and told her that there were Thorbiorn her brother and Vakr her son fighting against Olaf Howardson : so she turned back into the house, and told her son Skart of these tidings, and bade him go help his kinsmen; but he said: "I am more like to go fight for Olaf against them, for I hold it shame for three to fall upon one man, they being as like to win the day as any four other; I will nowise go." Thordis answered: "I was deeming that I had two stout-hearted sons; but sooth is that which is said,’ Many a thing lieth long hidden :’ for now I know that thou art rather a daughter than a son of mine, since thou durst not help thy kin: wherefore now shall I show full surely that I am a braver daughter than thou art a son."

Therewith she went away, but he waxed wondrous wroth, and he leapt up and caught hold of his axe, and ran out, and down along the bent to where they were fighting. Thorbiorn saw him, and set on all the more fiercely, but Olaf saw him not: and as soon as Skart came within reach of Olaf he fetched a blow at him with both hands, and drave the axe deep in between the shoulders. Olaf was about smiting at Thorbiorn, but when he got that stroke he turned about with axe raised aloft on Skart, who was weaponless now, and smote him on the head so that the axe stood in the brain: but even therewith was Thorbiorn beside Olaf, and smote him into the breast, and that was enough for the death of him, and the twain, Skart and Olaf, tumbled down dead.

Then Thorbiorn went up to Olaf and smote him across the face so that the front teeth and jaw-teeth fell out. Vakr said, "Why dost thou so to a dead man?"

Thorbiorn answered that it might yet serve him somewhat, and he took a clout therewith, and knit up the teeth in it, and kept them. Then they went into the house, and told Thordis the tidings; and they were both grievously wounded.

Thordis was much overcome thereat, and bewailed bitterly that eager egging-on of her son: but she gave them help and service there.

Now are these tidings told far and wide about Icefirth; and all thought it the greatest scathe of Olaf, such a defence as he had made withal, as the rumour of men told: for herein did Thor-biorn well, in that he told everything even as it had happened, and gave Olaf his due in the story.

So they fared home when they deemed they had might thereto, and their weariness had run off, and Thorbiorn went to Loonsere and asked for Sigrid: but he was told that she had not been seen since she went out with Olaf that other morning. She was sought for far and wide, but, as the tale goes, she was never seen again.

So Thorbiorn went home and abode in peace at his own house.

Chapter 5 - Howard claimeth Atonement of Thorbiorn

Howard and Biargey, saith the tale, got these tidings of the death of their son Olaf, and old Howard sighed heavily and went to his bed; and so say folk that he lay there in his bed all the next twelve months, and never came out of it. But Biargey took such rede that she rowed out to sea every day with Thorhall, and worked benights at what there was need to work in the house.

So wear away those seasons, and all is quiet: there was no blood-suit after Olaf, and men deemed it likely that his kin would never right their case; for Howard was deemed fit for nought, and withal he had to do with men mighty, and little like to deal fairly. So wear the seasons.

On a morning it fell that Biargey went to master Howard, and asked if he were waking, and he said so it was, and asked what she would: she said, "I would have thee arise and go to Bathstead, and see Thorbiorn; for it is manly for one who is unmeet for hardy deeds not to spare his tongue from Speaking that which may avail: nor shalt thou claim overmuch if he bear himself well" He answered: "I see nought good herein; yet shalt thou have thy will."

So old master Howard goes his way to Bath-stead, and Thorbiorn gave him good greeting, and he took the same. Then spake old Howard: "This is the matter in hand, Thorbiorn, that I am come to claim weregild for my son Olaf, whom thou slewest sackless."

Thorbiorn answered: "It is well known, Howard, that I have slain many men, and though folk called them sackless, yet have I paid weregild for none: but whereas thou hast lost a brave son and the matter touches thee so closely, meseemeth it were better to remember thee somewhat, were’ it never so little : now here above the garth goeth a horse that the lads call Dodderer: grey is he, Sorebacked, and hath lain cast a long while until now; for he is exceeding old: but now he hath, been fed on chaff these days past, and belike is somewhat amended; come, take him home, and keep him if thou wilt"

Howard reddened, and might not answer aught: he gat him gone straightway, wondrous wroth, and Vakr whooped after him as he walked all bent down to his boat, where Thorhall had awaited him meanwhile.

So they rowed home, and Howard went to his bed, and lay down, and never stood up for the next, twelvemonth.

This was heard of far and wide, and folk deemed that Thorbiorn had again showed his evil heart and unrighteousness in that answer. And so wear the seasons.

Chapter 6 - Biargey will have Howard go to the Thing

But the next summer Thorbiorn rides to the Thing with his men from Icefirth. And on a day Biargey goes again to talk to Howard, and he asked her what she would; she answered: "I would have thee ride to the Thing, and see if aught may be done in thy case." He answered : "This is clean contrary to my mind : thinkest thou that I have not been mocked enough of Thorbiorn my son’s bane, but that he must needs mock me also whereas all the chieftains are gathered together ?"

Said she: "It will not fare so. This I guess, that thou wilt have someone to help thee in thy case, Guest Oddleifson to wit: and if it hap, as I think, that he bring about peace between thee and Thorbiorn, so that he shall have to pay thee much money, then meseemeth he will let many men be thereby, and there will be a ring of men round about, and thou wilt be within the ring when Thorbiorn payeth thee the money: and now if it come to pass that Thorbiorn, before he pay thee that money, doeth somewhat to grieve the soul in thee, trying thee sorely, then shalt thou get thee gone at thy most speed; and then if it be that thou art lighter of heart than thou mightest look for, thou shalt not make peace in thy suit; because then thou mayest hope, as unlike as it looketh, that Olaf our son shall be avenged: but if thou wax not light-hearted, then go not away from the Thing unappeased, because then no avenging shall be."

Said Howard: "I know not what all this meaneth; but if I knew that Olaf my son should be avenged, nought should I heed any toil herein."

Chapter 7 - Old Howard rideth to the Thing

So she gat him ready, and he rode his ways: somewhat bent was the old man as he came to the Thing; by which time were the booths tilted, and all men come.

He rode to a great booth, even that which was owned of Steinthor of Ere, a mighty man and a great chief, of the stoutest and best heart: he leapt from his horse, and went into the booth, and there sat Steinthor and his men beside him: so Howard went up to him, and greeted him well, and well he took his greeting, and asked him who he was, Howard told of himself. Said Steinthor: "Art thou he who had that well-renowned son whom Thorbiorn slew, and whose stout defence is in all men’s mouths ? "

Howard said that even so it was: " And I will, master, that thou give me leave to abide in thy booth throughout the Thing."

He answered: "Surely I will give thee leave; but be quiet, and abstain from meddling ; for the lads here are ever gamesome, and thou hast a great sorrow in thine heart, and art little fit to hold thine own, an old man, and a helpless."

The tale tells that old Howard took to himself a berth somewhere within the booth, and lay down there, and never stirred thence, nor ever fell into talk with any until the Thing was far spent: but on a morning Steinthor came to him, and said : "Why earnest thou hither to lie there like a bedes? man and a losel?"

Said Howard; "I had it in my mind to seek atonement for Olaf my son, but my heart faileth me, for Thorbiorn is unsparing of foul words and dastardliness."

Said Steinthor: "Take my counsel; go thou to Thorbiorn and complain of thy case; and I deem that if Guest goes with thee thou shalt get righting of Thorbiorn." So Howard arose, and went forth all bent, and fared to the booth of Guest and Thorbiorn, and went in. Thorbiorn was therein, but not Guest: so Howard was greeted of Thorbiorn, who asked him why he was come thither. Howard answered: "So mindful am I of the slaying of Olaf my son that it seemeth to me but newly done; and my errand here is to claim weregild of thee for the slaying."

Thorbiorn answered: "Now give I good rede to thee; come to me at home in my own country and then may I comfort thee somewhat: but here am I busy over many things, and will not have thee whining against me."

Howard answered: "If thou wilt do nought?now, I have well proven that thou wilt do none?the more in thine own country: but I was deeming that someone might perchance back my case?here."

Then spake Thorbiorn: "Hear a wonder!" said he, "he is minded now to draw men upon me! get thee gone, and never henceforward speak to me hereof if thou wilt be unbeaten."

Then Howard waxed very wroth, and turned away from the booth, saying: "Too old am I now, but those days of mine have been, wherein I little looked to bear such wrong."

Now as he went, came men meeting him, Guest Oddleifson to wit, and his folk. Howard was so wroth that he scarce heeded where he went nor would he meet those men, so home he went to his booth; but Guest cast a glance at the man going past him.

Howard went to his berth, and lay down and drew a heavy sigh : so Steinthor asked him how he had fared, and he told him. Steinthor answered: "Such deeds are injustice unheard of ! great shame to him may be looked for some time or other."

Now when Guest came back to his booth he was well greeted of Thorbiorn, but he said: "What man went from the booth even now?"

Thorbiom answered : "A wondrous question from so wise a man! More come and go hereabout than I may make account of."

Guest answered : " Yea, but this man was unlike to other men: a man big-grown, albeit somewhat old and haltfoot, yet most manly of mien withal; and meseemed he was full of sorrow and little-ease and heart-burning: and so wroth he was that he heeded not whither he went: yea, and the man looked lucky too, and not one to be lightly dealt with."

Answered Thorbiorn : "This will have been old Howard, my Thingman."

Guest asked: "Was it his son that thou slewest sackless?"

"Yea, sure," said Thorbiorn.

Said Guest: "How deemest thou that thou hast held to the promise that thou madest me when I gave thee my sister?" Now there was a man named Thorgils, called Hallason after his mother, a man most renowned and great-hearted, who abode as then with Guest his kinsman, and this was in the days of his fast-waxing fame. Him Guest bade go after Howard and bid him thither; so he went to Howard’s booth, and told him that Guest would see him : but Howard said: "Loth am I to go and endure the

injustice of Thorbiorn and his shameful words."

Thorgils bade him fare. "Guest will back thy case," said he. So Howard went, how loth soever he were, and came to Guest, who stood up to meet him, and welcomed him, and set him down beside him, and spake: "Now shalt thou, Howard, begin, and tell forth all thy dealings with Thorbiorn"

He did so, and when he had spoken, Guest asked of Thorbiorn if that were in any wise true: and Thorbiorn said it was no vain babble. Then said Guest: "Heard any of suchlike injustice! Now hast thou two choices; either I break our bargain utterly, or thou shalt suffer me alone to doom and deal in this your case."

To this said Thorbiorn yea, and so they all went from out the booth. Then Guest called to him a many men, and they stood in a ring round about, but some stood together within the ring, and talked the matter over. Then spoke Guest: "I may not, Thorbiorn, award as much money as ought to be paid, because thou hast not wherewithal to pay it: but I award a threefold mangild for the slaying of Olaf. But as to the other wrong thou hast done to Howard, I offer thee, Howard, that thou come to me every spring and autumn tide, and I will honour thee with gifts, and will promise never to fail thee whiles we both live."

Thorbiorn said: "This will I yeasay, and will pay him at my ease at home in the country-side."

"Nay," said Guest, " thou shalt pay all the money here at the Thing, and pay it well and duly : but I myself will lay down one mangild."

And this same he delivered out of hand well paid down. But Howard sat down, and poured the money into his cloak-skirt. Thereon Thorbiorn went thereto, and paid up little by little, and when he had got through one mangild he said he had come to the end of what he had. Guest bade hint not to shirk the matter, and thereon Thorbiorn took a folded cloth, and undid it, and spake: "Surely now he will not deem himself paid short if he have this withal."

And thereon he draveit on to Howards face so that the blood fell adown him. " Lo there," said he, " the teeth and jaw-teeth of Olaf thy son I"

Then Howard beheld how these were tumbling into his cloak-skirt, and he leapt up mad-wroth, and the pennies rolled this way and that, and staff in hand he rushed at the ring of men, and thrust his staff so hard against the breast of one, that he fell aback, and lay long in a swoon: then leapt Howard over the ring of men, and touched none, and came down afar from any, and so ran home to his booth like a young man; but when he came to the booth, he would give no word to any, but cast himself down and lay as one sick.

After these things spake Guest unto Thorbiorn.: "No man is like to thee for evil heart and wrongdoing : nor can I see aught into a man if thou dost not repent it one day, thou or thy kin ? "

And so wroth and wood was Guest, that he rode straight from the Thing to Icefirth, and took away Thorgerd from Thorbiorn: whereby Thorbiorn and all his kin deemed their honour sorely minished, . but nought might they do. Guest said withal that Thorbiorn would have to abide a greater shame yet, and one more meet for him; and he rideth therewith away to Bardstrand with his kinswoman and a deal of money. The tale tells that Howard got him away home after these things and was by now exceeding stiff; but Steinthor said to him or ever they parted: "If ever thou need a little help, Howard, come thou to me."

Howard thanked him, and so rode home, and lay down in his bed and abode there the third twelvemonth and was by then waxen much stiffen

Biargey still held to her wont of rowing out to sea every day along with Thorhall.

Chapter 8 - Of Biargey and her Brethren

ON a day in summer as they rowed out to sea they saw a craft coming east up the firth, and they knew that it was Thorbiorn and his homemen. Then spake Biargey: "Now shall we take up our lines, and row to meet Thorbiorn, for I would see him: thou shalt row towards the cutter’s beam, and I will talk with him a little, whiles thou rowest about the craft." They did so and rowed toward the cutter: Biargey cast a word at Thorbiorn, hailing him, and asking him whither he would: he said he was going west to Vadil: "Thither is come out Sturla my brother, and Thio-drek his son, and I shall flit them down hither to me."

"How long wilt thou be gone, master?" said she.

" Nigh upon a week," said Thorbiorn.

Thorhall had by now rowed all about the cutter, and so when she had what she wanted they bent to their oars, and rowed off all they might. Then cried Thorbiorn: "To the devil with the wretched hag I let us straightway row after them, and slay him and maim her."

Then spake Brand : "Lo here again the truth of what men say of thee, that thou wilt never spare to do all the ill thou mayest: but I shall help them with all my might; so thou wilt have a dear bargain of it." So, what with Brand’s words, what with their having by now gotten far away, Thorbiorn kept quiet and went his ways.

Now spake Biargey: "As little as it seemeth likely, I deem that there will be an avenging for Olaf my son; now will we not go straight home."

"Whither away ? " said Thorhall.

" We will go. see Valbrand my brother," said she. Now he dwelt at Valbrandstead, a very old man in these days, but once of great renown: two sons he had, exceeding hopeful, but young in years, Torfi and Eyjulf to wit.

So they make no stay till they came there : Valbrand was abroad in the home-mead and manymen with him; he went to meet his sister, and greeted her, and prayed her to abide; but she said; "It may not be, I must be home to-night."

"What wilt thou, sister ? " said he.

She said: "I will that thou lend me thy seal-nets."

"Here be three," he said : "one old and grown untrustworthy now, though once it was strong enow, and two new and unproven : which wilt thou, two or three?"

She said : " The new ones will I have, but I will not risk taking the old : get them ready against I send for them."

He said that so it should be, and therewith they, went away.

Then said Thorhall: "Whither now?" She answered : "We will go see Thorbrand my brother." He dwelt at Thorbrandstead and was now very old: he had two sons, young and hopeful, hight Odd and Thorir.

So when they came thither Thorbrand gave them good greeting and bade them abide : she said it might not be.

" What wilt thou then, sister?" said he.

Quoth she: "I would have the loan of thy trout-nets."

He answered: "Here have I three, one very old, and two new that have not been used : which wilt thou, two or three?"

She said she would have but those new ones, and they parted therewith. Then they go their ways, and Thorhall asked: "Whither now?"

"Let us go see master Asbrand, my brother," said she. He dwelt at Asbrandstead, and was the eldest of those brethren, and had wedded a sister of master Howard: he had a son named Hallgrim,. young of years, but both big and strong; ill-favoured, but most manlike to behold. So when Biargey came there, Asbrand greeted her, and bade her abide, but she said she must home that evening. "What wilt thou," said he, "so seldom as thou comest to see thy kin ? "

" A little errand " said she; "we be unfurnished of turf-tools, so I would that thou lend me thy turf-axe."

He answered, smiling:" Here be two, one exceeding rusty, old and notched, and now deemed fit for nought; but the other new and big, though unused as yet."

She said she would have the new one when she came to fetch it: he answered that she should have her way : and so they fare home to Howardstead in the evening.

Chapter 9 - Howard goeth to Bathstead

Now weareth certain days, until Biargey thought she might look for Thorbiorn’s return from the west; then on a day she went to Howard’s bed, and asked him if he slept: he sat up thereon, and sang:

Never sleep besetteth Mine eyelids since that morning? Grief driveth the ship-dweller To din of steel a-meeting? Never since the sword-stems Wrought that brunt of bucklers; E’en those that slew my Olaf Utterly unguilty.

"Full surely," said she, "that is a huge lie, that thou hast not slept for three years long; but now is it time to arise, and make thee as valiant as may be, if thou wouldst avenge Olaf thy son; for never will he be avenged in thy lifetime but if that be tonight."

So when he heard her words he leapt up from his bed and forth on to the floor, and sang:

Once more amid my old age I ask for quiet hearing, Although the speech of song-craft Scarce in my heart abideth

Since then when first I wotted Of weapon-god downfallen. O son, how surely wert thou The strength of all my welfare I

And now was Howard as brisk as might be, and halt no longer: he went to a big chest that was full of weapons, and unlocked it, and set a helm on his head,and did on him a strong byrny: then he-looked up, and saw a mew flying across the windowy and therewith he sang a stave:

High Screaming, hail-besmitten,

Lo here the bird of slaughter,

Who coming to the corpse-sea

Craveth his meal of morning! ’

E’en so in old days bygone

From the old tree croaked the raven

When the sworn hawks of the slaughter

The warrior’s mead went seeking.

He armed himself speedily and deftly, and arrayed Thorhall also with goodly weapons: and so when they were ready he turned to Biargey and kissed her, saying it was not all so sure when they should meet again.

So she bade him farewell: "No need to egg thee on to the avenging of Olaf our son, for I wot that in thee might and a hardy heart are fellows."

So they parted: but those twain went down to the sea, and ran out a six-oared boat, and took the oars, and made no stay till they came off the stead of Valbrand : there a long tongue of the ere runneth out into the sea, and there they laid their boat: then Howard bade Thorhall watch the boat while he went up to the stead; and he had a spear in his hand, a noble weapon : but when he came up on to the home-mead there were the father and sons: the brethren were stripped and raking up the hay, and had taken off their shoes, and had laid them down in the meadow beside them; and they were high shoes.

So Valbrand went to meet Howard, and greeted him well, bidding him abide: he said it might not be.

"For I am come to fetch the seal-nets that thou didst lend to my wife, thy sister."

Then went Valbrand to his sons, and said to them: "Hither is come Howard your kinsman, and he is so arrayed as if he had some mighty deed on hand."

But when they heard that, they cast by their rakes and ran to their clothes, and when they came to take their shoes, lo! they were shrunken with the sun: nevertheless they thrust their feet into them at their speediest, so that they tore the skin off their heels, and when they came home their shoes were full of blood.

Valbrand gave his sons good weapons, and said; "Follow Howard well, and think more on your vengeance than on what may come after."

Then they went their ways to Thorbrandstead, and there also were Odd and Thorir speedily arrayed. Thence fared they till they came to Asbrandstead, and there Howard claimed his turf-cutter, whereon Hallgrim his kinsman arrayed himself to go with him, in whose company also went one An, a homeman of Asbrand, who did housecarle's service, and was fosterer of Hall-grim.

So when they were ready they went to where the boat lay, and Thorhall greeted them well. They were now eight in company, and each more warriorlike than the other. Now spake Hallgrim to Howard his kinsman, saying: "Why wentest thou from home, kinsman, lacking both sword and axe?"

He answered: "Maybe we shall fall in with Thorbiorn Thiodrekson, and then after our parting thou shalt speak another word, for most like I shall have the sword Warflame, the best of weapons."

Then they rejoiced, blessing the word of his mouth: "For much lies upon it that we fall to work in manly wise."

The day was now far spent, and so they ran out the boat, and leapt into her, and fell a-rowing: and even therewith they saw a great flock of ravens flying on before them over the tongue of the ere that lay ahead : then sang Howard this stave:

A sign I deem yon blood-fowl
Over the ere a-sweeping;
Since even now fat-feeding
To Odin's fowl I promised.
All we shall have to hearken,
O Hallgrim, to Hild's uproar,
And well are we, O fellows,
Whom happy hour awaiteth.

They fared over the sound, and out in the firth it blew hard, whereby they snipped many a sea forward : but they fell to work in manly wise, and made no stay till they came off Bathstead: thereat was a place good to lay a craft in, for Thorbiorn had let make a goodly haven there, and had had all cleaned and cleared out right up to land: the shore went down steep into the sea, and a cutter might lie there, or a craft bigger yet, if need were : great whale-ribs also were laid down there for slips, and the ends of them made fast with big stones: nor needed any man be wet going off board or on, were the ship bigger or lesser.

But above this haven ran a ridge of shingle, above which stood a great boat-house well found in all wise; and on the other hand above the ridge on one side was a big pool; from the boat-house one might not see the foreshore, but from the shingle-ridge both boat-house and foreshore were in sight

So when they came to land they leapt from the boat, and Howard spake, saying : "We will bear the boat up over the ridge unto the pool, and we ourselves also will be up the other side of the ridge, so that they may not see us at once; neither will we be over hasty in our hunting: let none leap up before I give the word." And now was it quite dusk.

Chapter 10 - Of the Metting of those men at Bathstead

Now must we tell how Thorbiorn and his fellows fare from the west, ten in company in a cutter: Sturla was there, and Thiodrek his son, Thorbiorn and Vakr, Brand the Strong and two house-carles; and their cutter was deeply laden.

That same evening they came to Bathstead just before dark, and Thorbiorn said: "We will fare nought hastily; we will let the cutter lie here tonight, and bear up nought save our weapons and clothes, for the weather is fine and like to be dry : and thou, Vakr, shalt bear ashore our weapons." So he took their swords first and their spears, and bore them up to the boat-house.

Then said Torfi : "Let us take their swords and him that goes with them."

"Nay, let it be yet," said Howard. But he bade Hallgrim go and take the sword Warflame, and bring it him: so when Vakr went down again, Hallgrim ran and took the sword and brought it to Howard, and he drew it forth and brandished it aloft.

Now Vakr came up again, and had laden his back with shields and his arms with steel-hoods, and he had a helm on his head. So when he was gotten to the pool-side they sprang up to take him : but he, hearing the clatter of them deemed full surely that war was abroad, and was minded to run back to his friends with their weapons, but as he turned round sharply, his feet stumbled by the pool, so that he fell down therein head foremost; the mud was deep there, and the water shallow, and the man heavy-laden with all those weapons; so he might not get up again, neither would any there help him, and that was Vakr’s latter end, that there he died. So when they had seen that, they ran down to the shingle-ridge, and when Thorbiorn beheld them he cast himself into the sea, and struck out from shore. Master Howard was the first to see this hap, and he ran and cast himself also into the sea, and swam after Thorbiorn.

But of Brand the Strong they say, that rushing forward, he caught hold of a ship-runner, a great whale-rib, and drove it into the head of An, Hallgrim’s fosterer; Hallgrim was just come down from the ridge when he saw An fall; so he ran up with axe raised aloft, and smote Brand on the head, cleaving him down to the shoulders, and it was even therewith that Thorbiorn and Howard leapt into the sea; and Hallgrim when he saw it leapt in after them.

Torfi Valbrandson ran to meet Sturla, a big and strong man, unmatched in arms, and he had all his war-gear on him: so they fought long, and in manly wise withal.

Chapter 11 - Of the Slaying of Thorbiorn Thiodrekson

Turn we now to Howard and Thorbiorn : they made from land, and a long swim it was till they came to a skerry that lay off there; and when Thorbiorn came up on to the skerry, Howard was but just off it: that seeth Thorbiorn, who being weaponless before him, catcheth up a big stone to drive at his head withal.

But when Howard saw that, it came into his mind of how he had heard tell of the Outlands that another faith was put forth there than the faith of the Northlands; and therewith he vowed that if any could show him that that faith was better and fairer, then would he trow in it if he might but overcome Thorbiorn.

And therewithal he struck out his hardest for the skerry. And so as Thorbiorn was a-casting the stone, his feet slipped up, for it was slippery on the stones, and he fell aback, and the stone fell on his breast, so that he was stunned thereby; and even therewith came Howard on to the skerry, and thrust him through with the Sword Warflame. Then was Hallgrim also come on to the skerry; but Howard smote Thorbiorn across the face, and clave out the teeth and jaw-teeth of him, and down right through. Hallgrim asked wherefore he did so to a dead man; but Howard said: "I had this stroke in my mind when Thorbiorn smote me in the face with that cloth knit up; for then the teeth that he had smitten from Olaf, my son with this same sword, tumbled about me."

Then they made for the land again. Men deemed afterward when that was told them, that Howard did valiantly to swim out into the firth, not knowing that there was any skerry before him: and a very long swim was that even as things went.

As they came up toward the shingle-ridge, a man came running to meet them with axe raised aloft, a man in a blue frock girt into his breeches; they turned toward him, and when they met they knew Torfi Valbrandson, and greeted him well, and he asked them if Thorbiorn were dead. Then sang Howard:

I drave adown the sword-edge
To jaw of sword-clash dealer;
I set the venomed sword-dew
Seeking the chieftain's eyen;
Nought saw I any shrinking
In that dweller in the scabbard

Warflame, when his old wielder
Who once was mighty fell there.

He asked what their deeds were, and Torfi said that Sturla was fallen, and the house-carles, but that An was slain withal. Then sang Howard :

So have we slain full swiftly
Four of the men who slew him,
The blood-stained son of Biargey;
Brave is the gain we bring you.
But one of our own fellows
An, unto earth is fallen
By bone of sea-wolf smitten
As Hallgrim sayeth soothly.

Then they went up to the boat-house, and found their fellows, who greeted them well. Then asked Eyjulf Valbrandson if they should slay the thralls; but Howard said that the slaying of thralls was no revenge for Olaf his son. "Let them abide here to-night, and watch that none steal aught of. the spoil."

Then Hallgrim asked what to do now, and Howard answered: "We will take the cutter and all we deem of avail, and make for under Moon-berg to see Liot the champion: somewhat of a revenge were there in such a man as that, if we might get it done."

So they take the cutter and manifold good things of those kinsmen, and row out along the firth, and up to Moonberg. Then spake Howard : "Now must we fare wisely. Liot is well ware of himself, for he hath ever feuds on hand; he hath watch held over him every night, and lieth in a shut-bed bolted every night: an earth-house is there under the sleeping-chamber, and the mouth of the same cometh up at the back of the houses, and many men he hath with him."

Then said Torfi Valbrandson: "My rede it is to bear fire to the stead, and burn every man's son within."

Howard said it should not be so: "But thou and Hallgrim my kinsman shall be upon the housetop to watch thence the mouth of the earth-house, lest any go out thereby, thee I trust best for this: here also be two doors in the front of the stead and two doors to the hall: now shall Eyjulf and I go in by one, and the brethren Odd and Thorir by the other, and so into the hall: but thou Thorhall shalt watch the cutter here, and defend it manly if there be need thereof."

So when he had ordered them as he would, they go up to the house. There stood a great out-bower in the home-mead, and a man armed sat under the wall thereof: so when they were drawn nigh the same, the man sees them, and springs up with the mind to give warning of their coming: now Hallgrim went foremost of that company, and he shot a spear after that man, and pinned him to the house-wall, and there he died on the spear. So then they went whither they were minded; Torfi and Hallgrim going to the outgate of the house.

Chapter 12 - Of the Slaying of Liot Thiodrekson

So tells the tale that Howard went into the hall; light burned above, but below it was dim: so he went into the bedchamber: and as it happed the mistress was not yet gone to bed, but was yet in the women’s bower, and women with her, and the bed-chamber was not locked. So Howard smote with the flat of his sword on the door, and Liot waked therewith, and asked who made that clatter, and so master Howard named himself.

"Why art thou there, carle Howard ? " said Liot, "we were told the day before yesterday that thou wert hard at death’s door."

Howard answered: "Of another man’s death mayest thou first hear : for hearken, I tell thee of the death of thy brethren, Thorbiorn and Sturla."

When he heard that, he sprang up in his bed, and caught down a sword that hung over him, and cried on the men in the hall to arise and take their weapons: but Howard leapt up into the bedchamber, and smote Liot on the left shoulder; but Liot turned sharply therewith, and the sword glanced from the shoulder, and tore down the arm, and took it off at the elbow joint: Liot leapt forth from the chamber with brandished sword, with the mind to hew down Howard; but then was Eyjulf come up, and he smote him on the right shoulder, and struck off his hand, and there they slew Liot.

Then arose great uproar in the hall, and Liot’s house-carles would stand up and take to their weapons; but now were Thorbrand’s sons come in, and here and there men got a scratch or a knock. Then spake Howard : "Let all be as quiet as may be, and do ye no manner of mischief, or else will we slay every man’s son of you, one on the heels of the other."

So they deemed it better to be all quiet; nor had they much sorrow of Liot’s death, though they were of his house.

So those fellows turned away, nor would Howard do more therein. Torfi and Hallgrim came to meet them, for they were about going in; and they asked what had been done; so Howard sang a stave:

Wrought good work Geirdi’s offspring
>On grove of water’s sunshine,
Beheld I Knott there brandish
The b!ood-ice sharp and bitter;
Eyjolf was fain of edge-play
With eager kin of warriors;
The wary one, the well-known
Would deal out flame of war-sheen.

Then they went down to the cutter, and Thor-hall greeted them well there.

Torfi Valbrandson asked what to do now. Said Howard: "Now shall we seek after some safeguard; for though the revenge be not as great as would, yet shall we not be able to keep ourselves after this work; for there are many of Thorbiorn’s kin of great account: and the likeliest thing I deem it to go to Steinthor of Ere; for he of all men has promised to help me in my need."

So they all bade him look to it, and they would do his will, and not depart from him till he deemed it meet. So then they put forth into the firth and lay hard on their oars, but Howard sat by the tiller. Then spake Hallgrim, bidding Howard sing somewhat; and he sang :

How have all we, O Hallgrim, Well wreaked a mighty vengeance On Thiodrek’s son I full surely We never shall repent it. For Thorbiorn’s sake the ship-lords In storm of steel were smitten; And I wot that the people’s wasters Yet left would fain repay us.

Chapter 13 - Of those Fellows and Steinthor of Ere

Of their voyage is nought to tell till they come to Ere; and it was then the time of day whenas Steinthor was sitting at table with his men : so they went into the hall with their weapons, four in company; and Howard went before Steinthor, and greeted him; Steinthor took his. greeting well, and asked who he was, and he said he was called Howard.

"Wert thou in our booth last summer?" He said that so it was. Then said Steinthor: "Lads, have ye seen any man less like to what he is now than the man he was then ? Meseems he might scarce go staffless from booth to booth, and we deemed him like to be a man bedridden, such grief of heart lay upon him : but now a wight man under weapons he seemeth to be. What tell ye any tidings?"

Howard answered: "Tidings we tell of: the slaying of Thorbiorn Thiodrekson, and his brethren Liot and Sturla, sons of Thiodrek, of Brand the Strong and the seven of them."

Steinthor answered: "Great tidings ye tell: who is it hath done this, and smitten down these the greatest of champions, these so mighty men ?"

Howard spake and said that he and his kinsmen had done it. Then spake Steinthor, and asked where Howard would seek for safeguard after such great deeds. Said Howard : "I was minded for that which has now come to pass, to wit, to come unto thee, for methought thou saidst last summer at the Thing, that if ever I needed some little help I should come to thee no later than to other chiefs."

Steinthor answered: "I know not when thou mayest deem thyself in want of great help if now thou deemest thy need but a little one; but thou mightest well think that I were no good friend in need, if I were slow to answer thee herein: neither shall it be so. I will bid thee, Howard, to abide here with thy fellows till this matter is brought to an end; and 1 promise to right your case for you all: for meseemeth ye are such men, that he will have the better part who taketh you to him; nor is it sure that such doughty men as ye be are lightly to be gotten: forsooth matters have gone herein more according to right than according to likelihood."

Then sang Howard a stave:

Due is it for the dealers Of Firth’s-sun to be stirring If they be fain to further

The folk of Valkyrs’fire; For the pride of Icefirth people Men tell hath had a down-fall By a blow that bodeth unpeace, By sackless sword-stems smitten.

They thanked Steinthor for his noble bidding; and he bade take their clothes and weapons, and let them dry clothes; and when Howard did off is helm, and put his byrny from him, he sang :

Laughed the lords of bloodwolf
Loud about my sorrow
When with steel-shower smitten
Fell my son the well-loved.
Well, since Odin’s woodmen
Went along the death-road
Otherwise wolf-wailing
Echoeth o’er the mountains.

Steinthor bade Howard go to the bench and sit over against him, and to marshal those fellows beside him, and Howard did so, marshalling his kinsman Hallgrim inward from him, and then inward yet sit Thorbrand’s sons Thorir and Odd; but outward from Howard sit Torfi and Eyjulf, the sons of Valbrand, then Thorhall, and then the homemen who sat there afore.

And when they sat down Howard sang a stave:

In this house, 0 Hallgrim, We shall have abiding; War-gale we deny not Warriors’ wrath that bringeth; Yet that slaying surely Unto straw shall tumble Scarce for those spear-heeders Shall I spend my substance.

Then said Steinthor : "Easy to hear of thee that things are going after thy will; and so forsooth would it be, if there were no blood-feud after such bold and mighty men as were those kinsmen all; who have left behind them such great men to follow up the feud."

Howard said that he heeded not the feud, and that there was an end from henceforth of sorrow or grief in his heart, neither should he think any end to the case aught but well. He was as glad and merry with every child of man there as if he were young again. Now are these tidings heard of far and wide, and were deemed to have fallen out clean contrary to what was like to have been. So there they sat at eve with master Steinthor lacking neither plenteous company nor goodly cheer; and there were no fewer there than sixty men defensible. Leave we them now a-sitting at Ere with master Steinthor in good welcome, and costly entertainment.

Chapter 14 - Of the Slaying of Holmgang-Liot

Liot was the name of a man who dwelt at Redsand; he was called Holmgang-Liot: he was both big and strong, and the greatest of Holmgang-fighters. Thorbiorn Thiodrekson had had his sister to wife : it is said of him that he was a most unjust man, who had had his axe in the head of every man who would not yield all to his will; nor was there any who might hold his head up in freedom against him all around Redsand, and far and wide otherwhere.

Now there was one called Thorbiorn, who dwelt at a stead called Ere, a man well stricken in years, a wealthy man, but of no great heart: two sons he had, one called Grim, and the other Thorstein.

Now as tells the tale, Liot and Thorbiorn had a water-meadow in common, a right good possession, which was so divided betwixt them that they should have it summer and summer about: but the brook which flooded the meadow in spring ran below Liot’s house, and there were water-hatches therein, and all was well arrayed. But so it fell out that whensoever it was Thorbiorn’s turn for the meadow he gat no water, and at last it came to this, that Liot gave out that the meadow was none of Thorbiorn’s, and

he were best not dare to claim it; and when Thorbiorn heard that, he deemed well that Liot would keep his word. It was but a little way between their houses, so on a day they met, and Thorbiorn asked Liot if he would verily take his meadow from him. Liot answered and bade him speak not another word of it: "It is not for thee any more than for others to go whining against what I will have; do one of two things : either be well content with my will herein, or I drive thee away from thine own, and thou wilt have neither the meadow nor aught else."

So when Thorbiorn saw Liot’s injustice, and whereas he had wealth and to spare, he bought the meadow at Liot’s own price, paying him sixty hundreds then and there; wherewith they parted.

But when those lads his sons heard hereof, they were full evil content, saying that it was the greatest robbery of their heritage to have to buy what was their own.

And this thing was heard of far and wide.

Now those brethren kept their father’s sheep. Thorstein being of twelve winters, and Grim of ten : and on a day in the early winter they went to the sheep-houses; for there had been a great snow-storm, and they would wot whether all the sheep were come home. Now herewith it befell that Liot had gone that morning to see to his drifts ; for he was a man busy in his matters; so just as the lads came to the sheep-house they saw how Liot came up from the sea shore ; then spake Grim to Thorstein his brother : "Seest thou Holmgang-Liot yonder, coming up from the sea ? "

"How may I fail to see him?" said Grim.

Then said Thorstein: "Great wrong hath he . done to us and to others, and I have it in my mind to avenge it if I might."

Said Grim : "An unwise word that thou wouldst do a mischief to such a champion as is Liot, a man mightier than four or five men might deal with, even were they full-grown : this is no game for children." Thorstein answered : "It availeth not to stay me, I will follow him all the same; but thou art likest to thy father, and wilt be a robbing-stock for Liot like many others."

Grim answered : "Whereas this hath got into thy head, kinsman, for as little avail as I may be to thee, I will help thee all I may." "Then is it well done of thee," said Thorstein, "and maybe that things will follow our right." Now, they bore hand-axes little out sharp. There they stand, and bide till Liot makes for the sheep-house: he passed by them quickly, having a poleaxe in his hand, and so went on his way, making as if he saw not the lads; but when he was even passing by them Thorstein smote on his shoulder; the axe bit not, but so great was the stroke that the arm was put out of joint at the shoulder. But when Liot saw (as he deemed) that the lads would bait him, he turned on them, and hove up his axe to smite Thorstein ; but even as he hove it aloft, ran Grim in on him, and smote the hand from him above the wrist, and down fell hand and axe together. Short space then they left betwixt their strokes; nor is aught more likely to be told hereof, than that there fell Holmgang-Liot, and neither of them hurt.

So they buried him in the snowdrift and left him there; and when they came home their father was out in the doorway; and he asked them what made them so late, and why their clothes were bloody.

They told of the slaying of Liot. He asked if they had slain him; and they said that so it was. Then said he : "Get ye gone, luckless wretches! ye have wrought a most unhappy deed, and have slain the greatest of lords and our very chieftain; and this withal have ye brought to pass, that I shall be driven from my lands and all that I have, and ye will be slain, and that is right well."

And therewith he rushed out away from the house.

Said Grim: "Let us have nothing to do with the old devil, so loathly as he goeth on! to hear how he goeth on, the sneaking wretch !"

Thorstein answered: "Nay, let us go find him, for I doubt me he is nought so wroth as he would make believe." So they go’ to him, and Thorbiorn spake gladly to them, and bade them bide him there; then he went home, and was away but a little while till he came back with two horses well arrayed; so he bade them leap a-horseback. "I will send you," said he, "to Steinthor of Ere, my friend, whom ye shall bid to take you in; and here is a gold ring, a right dear thing, which ye shall give him: he hath oft asked me for it, and never got it, but now it shall be free to him because of your necessity." Then the old man kissed his sons, and bade them to fare well, and that they might all meet again safe and sound. Nought is told of their journey till they came unto Ere betimes of a morning; so they went into the hall, and it was all hung about and both benches were full, and neither game nor glee was lacking* They went before Steinthor and greeted him. well,* and well he took their greeting, and asked, them who they were; so they told of their names and of their father, and withal Thorstein said: "Here is a ring which my father sendeth thee, and therewithal his greeting, and biddeth thee give us quarters this winter, or longer, if we need it.

Steinthor took the ring, and said: "Tell ye any tidings?"

They said : " The slaying of Liot, and we have slain him."

Steinthor answered: " Lo here another wonder, that two little lads should make an end of such a champion as was Liot! and what was his guilt?" They said what they deemed thereof. Steinthor said : "My rede it is that ye go across the floor up to Howard, the hoary carle who sits right over against me, and ask of him whether he will or will not take you into his company."

So do they, and go before Howard; he greeted them well, and asked for tidings, making as if he had not heard, and they told him the very innermost thereof; and when their tale was done, Howard sprang up to meet them, and sang a stave:

Ye, O fir-stems of the fight-sun, Thank we now for manly service; Men by valiant deeds left luckless Do I love, and ye are loved. Of all men on mould abiding Do I deem his slaughter meetest Let this fearful word go flying To my foemen of the westward.

Howard gave those brethren place outward from himself, and they sat there glad and merry.

These tidings are heard all about Redsand, and far and wide otherwhere. Liot was found dead there under the wall; and folk went to Thorbiorn and asked him thereof, and Thorbiorn denied not that his sons had slain him. But whereas Liot was unbeloved in Redsand, and that Thorbiorn said he had taken their deed amiss and driven them away, wherein the home-men bore him out, there was no taking up of the feud as at that time; and Thorbiorn sat at home in peace.

Chapter 15 - Steinthor goes to seek Stores in Otterdale

FALL we now to telling how they sit all together at Ere well holden; very costly it was unto Steinthor, so many men as he had, and so much as he must expend in his bounteous housekeeping.

Now there was a man named Atli, who dwelt at Otterdale, and was wedded to a sister of Steinthor of Ere, Thordis to wit; he was the smallest of men, a very mannikin, and it was said of him that- his mind was even as his body, and that he was the greatest of misers; yet was he come of great men, and was so.rich that he might scarce tell his wealth; and Thordis, Steinthor's sister, had been wedded to him for his wealth's sake.

As goes the tale the house at Otterdale was far. from the highway, and stood on the other side of the firth over against Ere.

Atli was not free enough of his money to keep workmen.; he himself worked night and day all he migh, and he was so self-willed, that he would have nought to do with other men either for good or ill. He was the greatest, husbandman, and had a.big store-house, wherein were all kinds of goods: there were huge piles of dried fish and all kinds of flesh-meat, and cheese and all things needful, and in that house had he made his bed, and he and his wife slept there every night.

Now. tells the tale that on a morning was Steinthor early, afoot, and he went to Howard's bed, and took him by the foot and bade him stand up; and Howard sprang up speedilyand forth on to the floor, and when he was arisen his fellows stood up one after another, even as their wont was, that all went whithersoever one had need to go; and when they were allarrayed they went forth into thehome-mead, where was Steinthor with certain of his men. Then said Howard: "We are ready, master, to fare whitherso thou wilt have us; and we will follow thee heartily, recking or reckless; but that is left me of my pride, that I go not on any journey but if I wot whither I be going."

Steinthor said : "I would fare to Atli my brother-in-law, and I would have you bear me fellowship on the road."

So they went down to the sea, where was the cutter they had taken from Thorbiorn ; so they ran it out and took to their oars, and rowed out into the firth. But Steinthor deemed that that company took all things with hardy heart

That morning master Atli arose up early and went from his bed ; he was so clad, that he had on a white doublet, short and strait. The man was not speedy of foot; he was both a starveling and foul of favour, bald and sunken-eyed. He went out and looked at the weather ; it was cold and very frosty. Now he saw a boat faring thitherward over the firth and nigh come to shore, and he knew master Steinthor his brother-in-law, and was ill-content thereat. There was a garth in the home-mead, standing somewhat out into the fields; therein stood a haystack drawn together from all about: so what must Atli do but run into the garth, and tumble the hay stack down on himself and lie thereunder.

But of Steinthor and that company it is to be?told that they come aland and go up to the house,?and when they came to the store-house Thordis?sprang up and greeted well her brother and all of?them, and said he was seldom seen there. Steinthor asked where was Atli his brother-in-law; and?she said he was gone out but a little while; so?Steinthor bade seek him, and they sought him about?the stead and found him not, and so came back and?told Steinthor. Then said Thordis : "What wilt?thou of us, kinsman?" He answered: "I was?deeming that Atli would have given or sold me some?stores."

Said she: "Meseemeth I have no less to do herewith than Atli; and I will that thou have hence what thou wilt." He said that he would take that willingly; so they clear out the store-house, and bear what was in it down aboard the cutter till it was laden with all kinds of good things. Then said Steinthor : " Now shall ye go back home with the cutter, but I will abide behind with my sister; for I am fain to see how my brother-in-law Atli bears himself when he cometh back."

" Meseems, kinsman," said Thordis, "there is no food in this; it will be nothing merry to hear him. \\xt do as thou wilt; only thou shalt promise me to be no worse friend to Atli than before, whatsoever he may say or do."

Steinthor said yea to this; and so she set him behind certain hangings where none might see him, but the others went their ways back home with the cutter; they had rough weather on the firth and shipped many seas before they came to land.

Chapter 16 - Of Atli the Little and his Words

Turn we now to Atli lying under the haystack, who, when he saw them depart from the shore, crept out from under the stack; and was so stiff that he might scarce stand up; he drags himself home to the store-house, and every tooth in his head chattered again ; he stared wide and wild round about, and seeth that the storehouse hath been cleared; then saith he: "What robbers have been here ?"

Thordis answered: "None have robbed here; but here have been Steinthor my brother, and his men, and I have given them what thou callest robbed"

Atli answered: "Of all things I shall rue most that ever I wedded thee; wretched man that I am for that wedding I I wot of none worse than is Steinthor thy brother, nor greater robbers than they of his house. Now is all taken and stolen and harried from me, so that we shall soon have td take to the road."

Then said Thordis: "We shall never lack for wealth : come thou to bed and let me warm thee somewhat, for meseems thou art wondrous cold."

So he crawled under the bedclothes to her. Steinthor deemed his brother-in-law a very starveling: he had nought on his feet; his cowl was pulled over his head, and came nowhere down him.

So Atli nestles under the clothes beside her, and is mad of speech, ever scolding at Steinthor, and calling him a robber. Then he was silent for awhile.

But when he waxed warm, then said.he; "Sooth to say, I have a great treasure in thee,; and truly no such a noble-minded man may be found as is Steinthor my brother-in-law, and that is well bestowed which he hath gotten; it is even as if I had it myself."

And so he went on a long while praising Steinthor. Then Steinthor came forth to the bed, and Atli seeth him and standeth up and greeteth him.

Then said Steinthor: "What thinkest thou, brother-in-law Atli, have we cleared out thy storehouse?"

Atli answered: " It is most sooth that all is best bestowed! which thou hast, and I bid thee take all thou wilt of my goods, for nought is lacking here: thou hast done as most befitteth a chieftain in taking to. thee those men who have wreaked their griefs, and thou wilt be minded to see them through it as a great man should."

Said Steinthor: "Atli, I will bid thee be nought so miserly as thou hast been hitherto; live thy life well, and get thee workmen, and mingle with men; I know thee for no paltry man, though thou makest thyself such for perverseness sake.’ r Atli promised this; and Steinthor went home that day, and the brothers-in-law parted in all kindness. Steinthor cometh home to Ere, and deemeth he hath sped well. There they sit at home now, and the. winter wears: there were holden sturdy skin-plays and hall-plays.

Chapter 17 - Men get ready for the Thing

There was one Swart, a thrall at Ere, a big man, and so'strong that he had four men's might; he was handy about the stead, and did much work. Now on a day Stein-thor let call this thrall to him, and said: "They will have thee in the game with us to-day, for we lack a man." Swart answered: "It is idle to bid me this, for I have much work to do, and I deem not that thy champions will do it for me; yet I will grant thee this if thou wilt."

So saith it that Hallgrim was matched against Swart, and the best one may tell of it is, that every time they fell to, Swart went down, and after every fall his shoes came off, and he would be a long while binding them on again. This went on for long in the day, and men made great jeering and laughter thereat; but Howard sang a stave:

The lords of sea-king's stallion,
Valbrand's sons the doughty,
Nought so long they louted
Low o'er shoe-thongs, mind we,
When we went, O Valkyr,
Toward my son's avenging,
And Gylfi's garth swelled round me
On that day of summer.

The play was of the best. Hallgrim was then eighteen winters old, and was deemed like to be a most doughty man by then he came to his full growth. .

So sayeth it that the winter wore, and nought befell to tell of, yea and until they were ready to go to the Thing.

Steinthor said he knew not what he would do for those fellows; he would not have them with him to the Thing, and he thought it not good to let them abide at his house the while. But a few days before the Thing he and Atli his brother-in-law met, and Atli asked what He was minded to do with his guests while the Thing lasted. Steinthor said he knew not where he could bestow them, so as to be unafraid for them: "Unless thou take them." Atli said : "I will bind myself to take these men." "Thou dost well therein," said Steinthor. Said Atli: "I will help thee in all thou wilt so far as my might goeth."'

"Right well I trust thee so to do," said Steinthor.

Chapter 18 - Men ride to the Thing

After this Howard and his fellows went their ways with Atli, and came to Otter-dale, and there Atli welcomed Howard with both hands. Nought lacked there that they needed, and Atli made them the most goodly feast: there were ten stout men there now. Atli cleared out the store-house, and made their beds there, and hung up their weapons, and all was arrayed in the best wise. But Steinthor summoned men to him, and lacked neither for friends nor kin, and with great men also was he allied : so he rode to the Thing with three hundred men, all which were his Thingmen, kin, friends, or men allied to him.

Chapter 19 - Of the Men of Dyrafirth

There was a man hight Thorarin, the priest of Dyrafirth in the west country, a great chief, and somewhat stricken in years; He was the brother of those sons of Thiodrek, but by far the thoughtfullest and wisest of them. He had heard of these tidings and of the slaying of his brethren and kinsmen, and deemed himself nigh touched by it, and that he might not sit idle in the matter whereas the blood-feud fell to him most of all. So before folk rode to the Thing, he summoned to him the men of Dyrafirth, his friends and kinsfolk. There was one Dyri, next of account after Thorarin the priest, and a great friend of his; Thorgrim was the name of his son, a man full grown at this time: it is told of him that he was both big and strong, and a wizard of the cunningest, who dealt much in spells. Now when Thorarin laid this matter before his friends, they were of one accord in this, that Thorarin and Dyri should ride to the Thing with two hundred men; but Thorgrim, Dyri's son, offered himself to compass the slaying of Howard, and all those kinsmen and fellows : he said how the word went that Steinthor of Ere had held them through the winter, and that he had promised to uphold their case at law to the uttermost against such as had the blood-feud after those kinsmen.

Thorgrim said that he knew how Steinthor was ridden from home, a great company, to the Thing, and that those fellows were gotten to Otterdale to Atli the Miser, brother-in-law of Steinthor: "And there is nought to hinder our slaying them one on the heels of the other."

So this rede was taken, that Thorgrim should ride from home with eighteen men: of whose journey is nought to tell till they come to Atli's stead in Otterdale early of a morning, and ride into a hollow whence they might not be seen from the house; then bade Thorgrim to light down, and they did so, and baited their horses; but Thorgrim said that he was so sleepy that he might not sit up, so. he slept with a skin drawn over his head, and was ill at ease in his sleep.

Chapter 20

Of Atli's Dreaming

Now must we take up the tale of what they were about in the house at Otterdale : they slept in the store-house that night according to wont, arid in the morning they were waked, because Atli in his sleep laboured so, that none of them might sleep because of it; for he tossed about and breathed heavily, and beat about with hand and foot in the bed; till Torfi Valbrandson leapt up and woke him, laying, that they might not sleep for him and his goings on. Then sat up Atli, stroking his bald head.

Howard asked if aught had been shown to him, and he said verily it was so: "Methought I went forth from the store-house, and I saw how wolves ran over the wold from the south eighteen in company, and before the wolves went a vixen fox, and so sly a creature as was that, saw I never erst; exceeding ogre-like was it and evil; it peered all about, and would have its eyes on everything", and right grimly methought all the beasts did look. But even as they were come to the stead Torfi woke me; and well I wot that these are fetches of men ; so stand we up straightway."

Nor did Atli depart from his wont, but sprang up and cast his cape on him, and so out as swift as a bolt is shot, while they take their weapons and clothes and array themselves at their briskest; and when they were well-nigh dight, cometh Atli back clad in a strong byrny, and with a drawn sword in his hand; then spake Atli: "Most like it is that it falleth out now as many guessed it would, to wit, that it would avail not Steinthor my brother-in-law to find you a harbour here; but I pray you to let me rule in what now lies before us ; and first it is my rede that we go out under the house-wall, and let them not gore us indoors ; as for fleeing away, I deem that hath not come into your heads.' And they say that so it

shall be.

Chapter 21 - Of the Otterdalers

Tell we now how Thorgrim woke, and was waxen hot; then spake he: "I have been up to the house and about it awhile ; but all was so dim to me that I wot not what shall befall me; yet let us go home to the house: meseems we should burn them in, so may we the speediest bring the end about."

So they take their weapons, and fare into the home-mead. And when Atli and his fellows saw the men, Atli said: "Here be come the Dyrafirthers, I think, with;Thorgrim, Dyri's son, at the head of them, the worst man and the greatest wizard in Dyrafirth; he is the most friend of Thorarin, who has the blood-feud for Thorbiorn his brother: now I am minded, as unlike as it may seem, to go against Thorgrim ; but thee, Howard, I will have to do deal with two, for thou art proven and a great champion. To Hallgrim thy kinsman I allot those twain who are stoutest; to Torfi and Eyjulf, Valbrand's sons, I allot four; and to Thor-brand's sons, Odd and Thorir, other four; to Thor-biorn's sons, Grim and Thorstein, I allot three, and to Thorhall and my house-carle each one his man."

So when Atli had ordered them as he would, Thorgrim and his men come on from the south toward the house ; and they see that things have gone otherwise than they looked for, arid that men are standing there with weapons, ready to deal with them; then said Thorgrim: "Who may know but that Atli the craven hath more shifts than we wotted of; yet all the same shall we go against them.!'

Then men fell on as they had been ordered; and the first onset was of Atli the. Little against Thorgrim, smiting at him two-handed with his sword; but never it bit on him. So a while they smote, and never bit the sword on Thorgrim. Then said Atli: "As a troll art thou, Thorgrim; and not as a man, that the iron biteth not on thee." Thorgrim answered: "How durst thou say such things, whereas I hewed on thee e'en now at my best, and the sword bit not on thine evil pilled pate."

Then seeth Atli that things will not go well on this wise; so he casteth by his sword, and runneth under Thorgrim's hands, and casteth him down on the field. Now is there no weapon beside him, and he knew that the odds were great between them, so he grovelleth down on him, and biteth the throat of him asunder, and then draggeth him to where his sword lay, and smiteth the head from off him. Then he looked round about wide-eyed, and saw that Howard had slain one of those whom he had to deal with. Thither ran Atli first, and for no long while they gave and took before the man fell dead. Hallgrim had slain both those he had to deal with, and Torfi in likewise: Eyjulf had slain one of his: Thorir and Odd had slain three, and one was left: Thorstein and Grim had slain two and left one: Thorhall had slain his man; but the house-carle had not slain his. Then bade Howard to hold their hands; but Thorstein Thorbiornson said: "Our father shall not have to hear west there in Redsand that we brethren could not do our allotted day's work as other men." And therewith he ran at one of those with axe aloft and smote it into his head that he gat his bane. Atli asked why not slay them all; but Howard said that was of no use. Then Atli sat down and bade lead the men before him; then he shaved the hair from them and polled them, and tarred them thereafter; he drew his knife from the sheath, and sheared the ears from each of them, bidding them so ear-marked go find Dyri and Thorarin; and said that now perchance they would mind them how they had come across Atli the Little. So they went thence, three of them, who had come there eighteen in company, stout men and well arrayed.

Now sang Howard a stave:

West and east is wafted
Word to Icefirth's dwellings,
Word of weapons reddened

In the spear-storm’s waxing;
Now for spear-play’s speeding
Sped the war-lords hither,
Soothly small the matter
Unto sons of Valbrand.

Then they went their ways and buried the slain, and thereafter gat them rest and peace even as they would.

Chapter 22 - Of the Peace made at the Thing

Tell we now how men come to the Thing a very many: many chieftains there were and of great account; there were Guest Oddleifson, and Steinthor of Ere, and Dyri and Thorarin.

So they fell all together to talking of the case, and Steinthor was for Howard and his fellows, and he craved peace for them, and; Guest Oddleifson to be judge, whereas the matter was fully known to him; and because they were well ware afore of their privy dealings, they fell in to it gladly.

Then spake Guest: "Forasmuch as ye both will have an award of me, I shall not be slow to give it: and first we must turn back to what was said last summer about the slaying of Olaf Howard-son, for the which I award three man-fines; against this shall the slaying be set of Sturla and Thiodrek and Liot, who were slain quite sackless; but Thorbiorn Thiodrekson shall have fallen unatoned be* cause of his injustice, and those his unheard-of dealings with Howard, and many other ill-deeds : unatoned also shall be Vakr and Scart, his sister’s sons; but the slaying of Brand the Strong shall be set against An’s slaying, the fosterer of Hall-grim : one man-fine shall be paid for the serving-man of Liot of Moonberg, whom Howard and his folk slew.

"So is it concerning the slaying of Holmgang-Liot that I can award no atonement for him, for plain to see is the wrongfulness of his dealings with Thorbiorn, and all them over whom he might prevail; and according to right was it that two little lads should slay such a champion as was Liot. Thorbiorn also shall have freely all the meadow that they had in common. On the other hand, to ease the mind of Thorarin, these men shall fare abroad; to wit: Hallgrim Asbrand’s son, Torfi and Eyjulf, sons of Valbrand, Thorir and Odd, sons of Thorbrand, Thorstein and Grim, sons of Thorbiorn : and whereas thou, Thorarin, art old exceedingly, they shall not come back before they hear that thou art passed away ; but Howard shall change his dwelling, and not abide in this quarter of the land, and Thorhall his kinsman in likewise.

"Now will I that ye hold the peace well and truly without guile on either side."

Then came Steinthor forth, and took peace for Howard and all those fellows on the terms aforesaid by Guest; and he paid also the hundred of silver due. And Thorarin and Dyri stood forth ill seeming manly wise, and were well content with the award.

But when the case was ended, thither to the Thing came those earless ones, and in the hearing of all told what was betid in their journey. To all seemed the tidings great, and yet that things had gone as meet was: men deemed that Thorgrim had thrust himself into enmity against them, and had gotten but his due.

But now spake Guest: "Most sooth it is to say that ye kinsmen are unlike to other men for evil heart and unmanliness: how came it into thine head, Thorarin, to make as if thou wouldst have peace, and yet fare so guilefully ? But whereas I have spoken somewhat afore, so that this thy case might have a

peaceful end, even so will I let it abide according to my word and my judgment; though forsooth, ye Thorarm and Dyri, were well worthy to come off the worser for your fraud’s sake; for which cause indeed I will nevermore be at your back in whatever case ye may have on hand. But thou, Steinthor, be well content, for henceforward I will help thee in thy cases, with whomsoever thou hast to do; for herein hast thou fared well and manly."

Steinthor said that Guest should have his will herein: "Meseemeth they have come to the worse, losing many of their men and their honour withal." Therewith came the Thing to an end, and Guest and Steinthor parted in all friendship, but Thorarin and Dyri are very ill-pleased. So when Steinthor came home he sent after the folk in Otterdale, and when they met either told each other how they had sped, and they deemed that things had gone well considering the plight of matters.

They thanked Steinthor well for his furtherance, and said withal that Atli his brother-in-law had done well by them, and had been doughty of deeds moreover, and they called him the valiantest of fellows. So the greatest friendship grew up between the brethren-in-law, and Atli was holden thenceforward for the doughtiest of men wheresoever he came.

Chapter 23 - Of the Feast at Howard’s House

After these things fared Howard and all of them home to Icefirth, and Biargey was exceeding fain of them, and the fathers of those brethren withal, who deemed themselves grown young a second time. Then took Howard such rede, that he arrayed a great feast, and his house was great and noble, and nought was lacking there: he bade thereto Steinthor of Ere, and Atli his brother-in-law, Guest Oddleifson and all his kindred and alliance. Great was the throng there, and the feast of the fairest; there sat they altogether a week’s space joyful and merry.

Howard was a man very rich of all manner of stock, and at the feast’s ending he gave to Steinthor thirty wethers and five oxen, a shield, a sword, and a gold ring, the best of treasures. To Guest Oddleifson he gave two gold rings and nine oxen : to master Atli he gave good gifts : to the sons of Valbrand, and the sons of Thorbrand, and the sons of Thorbiorn he gave the best of gifts: good weapons to some, and other things to others. To Hallgrim his kinsman gave he the sword Warflame, and full array of war therewith exceeding goodly. And he thanked them all for their good service and doughty deeds. Good gifts withal he gave to all that he had bidden thither, for he lacked neither gold nor silver.

So after this feast rideth Steinthor home to Ere, Guest to Bardstrand, and Atli to Otterdale; and now all part with the greatest love. But they who had to fare abroad went west to Vadil, and thence to sea in the summertide: they had a fair wind and made Norway.

In those days Earl Hakon ruled over Norway. So they were there the winter, and in spring got them a ship and went a-warring, and became most famous men. This was their business for certain seasons, and then they fared out hither whenas Thorarin was dead ; great men they became, and much are they told of in tale here in the land, and far and wide otherwhere.

So leave we to tell of them.

Chapter 24 - How Howard died Full of Years and Honour

But of Howard it is told that he sold his lands, and they went their ways north to Swarfadardale, and up into a dale called Oxdale. There he built a house, and abode there certain winters, calling that stead Howardstead.

But within certain winters heard Howard these tidings, that Earl Hakon was dead, and King Olaf Trygvison come to the land and gotten to be sole king over Norway, and that he set forth new beliefs and true. So when Howard heard hereof he broke up his household, and fared out with Biargey and Thorhall his kinsman. They came to King Olaf and he gave them good welcome. There was Howard christened with all his house, and abode there that winter well accounted of by King Olaf. That same winter died Biargey; but the next summer Howard and Thorhall his kinsman fared out to Iceland. Howard had out with him church-wood exceeding big: he set up house in the nether part of Thorhallsdale, and abode there no long time before he fell sick; then he called to him Thorhall his kinsman, and spake: "Things have come to this that I am sick with the sickness that will bring me to my death; so I will that thou take the goods after me, whereof I wish thee joy; for thou hast served me well and given me good fellowship. Thou shalt flit thine house to the upper part of Thorhallsdale and there shalt thou build a church, wherein I would be buried."

So when he had ordered things as he would, he died a little after.

Thorhall fell to speedily, and brought his house up the dale, and made a goodly stead there, and called it Thorhallstead : he wedded well, and many men are come from him; and there he dwelt till eld.

Moreover it is said that when Christ’s faith came to Iceland Thorhall let make a church of that wood which Howard had brought out hither.

The stateliest house was that, and therein was set Howard’s grave, and he was held for a very great man.

Wherewith make we an end of this tale as for this time.